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TREATY 7 FIELD RESEARCHER
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses facts that have come to light in his interviews:
Indian religion; land ownership; attitudes to natives.
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Allan Wolfleg, Treaty 7 Field Researcher - oral report

Allan: Yes, there are some things that I haven't mentioned in some of the elders interviews which correspond with papers of R.N. Wilson who was close to the Indian agents in the south. These books are in two volumes and they haven't been published yet. There's four events that kind of lead up to the treaty which brings us to the question of peace treaty.

One was in 1825. There was a peace treaty with the Kootenay Indians, the southwestern Indians. It was a peace treaty. In 1865, there was the American treaty, with Isaac and the Americans of the Blackfoot nation of which the Canadians, the Blackfeet on this side of the line, weren't ready to give up anything. They came back to where they were living with the southern Blackfeet so the understanding was the northern Blackfeet that were, you know, this was new to us. They didn't really give anything out. was the Bluecoats. And in 1870 when there was a peace treaty with the eastern-northern Cree and Assiniboine after the last battle in 1870 around the Lethbridge area which was also recorded in the Lethbridge newspaper. There was such chiefs as Big Bear, Piapot who

became famous later on in 1885 where some of the war chiefs had a battle with the Blackfoot nation. And so they had a peace treaty in 1871. In 1877 in the spring, there was a peace treaty between the Blackfoot and the Sioux or the Assiniboine. So there was these peace treaties. They traded with tobacco, get tobacco and give it to a messenger. They used this as a gift to, lets say, the Blackfeet from the Crees to say this is our land and this is your land. This is sort of a contract they understood. After that treaty, tobacco was chopped - chopped and mixed with another herb or herbs so this could be used for a pipe. And this still goes, is still practised in some ceremonies. Tobacco twist is cut up and mixed and only those people who went to an initiation could only do this, filling the pipe. And also the pipe has to be passed around and it has to be passed back to this person to light it again. This is a real ritual so the tobacco is also tied in with the Indian religion.

So in 1877 the treaty of Treaty No. 7, this was just like the other ones. Even the intercoms that were recorded in R.N. Wilson's papers, the most important thing that happened in 1877 was the return of the buffalo. There was no mention of the treaty, Treaty No. 7, because Treaty No. 7 was just like the others. But the only difference was that there was no tobacco given from the R.C.M.P. to the Indians but currency, money was given.

Elders' interviews, Yellow Sun's interview, he related something that was told to him by Many Swans who was one of the signers of the treaties. He said the treaty is a token of peace for Indians to stop fighting. Even when Sitting Bull sent a messenger to Crowfoot to kind of help him out, he told Crowfoot's messenger, "I have taken the money and put away my battles." There is no mention of surrendered land. These are the things that ... and then he referred to the treaty of 1877 and the proposed treaty payment, which they understood that there would be more to come. They didn't say they said first treaty, they referred to it as the you know this kind of thing and this is how they understood the treaty of 1877.

The other thing was also being involved in these elders interviews even though I knew about the Indian religion. I was finished before Christmas Assiniboines. I got a better idea what really takes place and when the peace pipe or the medicine pipe and the tobacco is involved. People make their promises in their face or words on the medicine pipe. And the Indian religion is not only a religion itself, it's a way of life. Everything that Indians do is part of their religion. They get up even before the sun comes up to welcome the sun; even before it sets they say goodbye prayers to it. Even in the coming of the night, coming of the day, they pray to all these things which were part of nature. They classify nature as the woman. When they pray they mention the Creator, the woman and the sun. These are the things. Nature is the woman which in terms means that the land, forests,

rivers, stones, grass, something that has something to do with . They have some sweatbaths. Before they dig the ground they have to ask permission to dig the ground. Before they bury the rocks they have to ask for permission to get the rocks and when they are finished they put them back, put some of it back. Like the twist tobacco, before they put it in their pipes they put some of it either in . So this is some of the rules in reserves that was also the Indian way of life.

And when you are looking at the treaties even the negotiations, you see the white man and the Indian. The white man has the imperial authority of the Crown, whereas the Indian has his religion. Then the terms of ownership, ownership for the land, this is what the white man was looking. The Indian was looking at sharing because they couldn't really give up the land that wasn't solely theirs. They shared the land with the Creator, birds, anything that flies, all the animals, etc. This was their concept, they had no concept of ownership even though this was the land they were living. It was given to them by the Creator so they had no right to sell it but they could share it. Most of the things that came out of the interviews was , the land that was loaned out. And in one of the interviews it even refers to one of the elders,

In the interviews I asked most of the elders about the treaty money. He said, this treaty money was used as a token of peace to us at the treaty. Now the question of the land I don't know what it had to do with the money. He couldn't see any concept between the money and the land. He said, "Remember the last Indian dance. Whitehorse Rider who is known as Mr. Bull Band today, he used to dance. That was in 1873, and I was in the public on the dance floor and to all the people, he says, 'Is it about time that we start looking into the land that we lost. It is a large territory, before I'm too old'." You know, he still associated swiftly this land, this territory that was lost, even these burst out laughing and said we can't see any comparison between the money that was given and the land. they wanted to share the land so they loaned the land out. They had different descriptions of the land, 2 feet or In the first treaty they measured by posts so they could farm. They could only farm the land 6 inches deep. But it was plowed a foot; they allowed an extra foot to keep cattle in. And this was just, underneath there was never any, I don't know, and they made references about a rancher east of the Blackfoot reserve, who bought land around the 20s and the 30s and the war. They mentioned at the show hall, the money was given out at this building, war building and the oil was discovered at Mr. Dews ranch. The money came back to the Indians and he didn't get any except for people coming to drill on his ranch.

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